

Are Media Setting Up Reagan on the Summit?

Mikhail Gorbachev, head of the "evil empire," is the new media hero. As the Geneva summit approaches, he has become the darling of the journalists. He excites the scribes in the same way Pete Rose exhilarates baseball fans. Bruce Springsteen's acclaim among teenagers pales in comparison.

An exaggeration? *Time* magazine, plugging its exclusive interview with the Kremlin boss last week, says Gorbachev is "well informed, urbane, witty, in total command and, above all, a man who knows his own mind." And that's just for openers. No accolade is too excessive.

He is, well, "simply marvelous," as Billy Crystal might put it. And so handsome. He's "well tanned," says *Time*, "ruddy in the cheek," and "conveys an image of robust health and naturally controlled energy." He's "solid," but "not fat." And "he laughs easily."

He also "dominates a meeting with three extraordinary tools: eyes, hands and voice." The voice "is extraordinary, deep but also quite soft. [Did some moon-struck maiden write this or *Time* editors?] Sometimes Gorbachev talks for several minutes in a near whisper, low and melodious. Then, without warning, his voice can cut across the room," but it is never "angry or bullying."

The new Soviet headmaster is really just a helluva guy. And, if you're not sold at this point, *Time* wants to impress upon you that he's a snappy dresser as well. He is, in fact "[r]esplendent in a well-tailored blue pinstripe suit, diagonally striped tie and gleaming white shirt...." And his wife? Well, notes Editor-in-Chief Henry Grunwald, "the Western press is in love with her."

Time's stunning description of Gorbachev, much of it filtered through the rest of the major media, has given a richer meaning to the word "bootlick." The interview itself was extraordinary, in that of the 11 questions asked of him—six written and five spoken—not a single one could be considered anything close to a hardball.

Typical of the questions tossed at the Soviet dictator: "The events of recent weeks, such as the U.S. announcement of the ASAT test and the spy dust charges, could hardly have been helpful in terms of preparations for the summit meeting. Is this type of thing seriously damaging?" How's that for a toughie?

Not one question about the continuing Soviet buildup, the cheating on the existing strategic arms tests, the murder of Maj. Nicholson, the ongoing horrors in Afghanistan, etc. Nothing that would embarrass the new Soviet superhero in the slightest. There was not a single query hinting that maybe the Reagan Administration has a right to be suspicious of Gorbachev, despite his scintillating personality. (Those senior *Time* editors responsible for this shameless pandering to Gorbachev, incidentally, are Henry A. Grunwald, editor in chief of *Time* Inc., and Ray Cave, *Time's* managing editor.)

Gorbachev may have dazzled *Time* and other newsmen, but he is still pressing the Soviet hard line. He accuses the U.S. of "militarizing" space, for instance, when in 1984, the Soviets conducted 100 space launches, of which 80 per cent were purely military in nature (the total number of U.S. space launches in 1984 was about 20).

In talking to senators in Moscow last week, Gorbachev grabbed headlines by suggesting he favored a radical missile-cut proposal. Unfortunately, the proposal has yet to be presented to our arms control negotiators in Geneva, and it was contingent upon our giving up even normal research on the

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